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Weish - Four Weeks Among the Sioux Tribes - 1882

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FOUR WEEKS
AMONG SOME OF
THE SIOUX TRIBES
OF
DAKOTA AND NEBRASKA,
TOGETHER WITH A
BRIEF CONSIDERATION
OF
THE INDIAN PROBLEM
BY
HERBERT WELSH.

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A MONTH

AMONG THE SIOUX INDIANS.

WE FOUND ourselves about midday, June 17th, at the little town of Chamberlain, Dakota, a place of some three hundred inhabitants, lying upon the east bank of the Missouri river. To this distant point we had come by the request of Bishop Hare, in order to gain some knowledge of the schools and missions established, under his direction, by the Episcopal Church, among the Sioux Indians. As we left the train, our eyes sought eagerly for the Rev. Luke Walker, a full-blooded Sioux and a presbyter of the Church, who was to have met us at the station and thence to have conducted us to his mission among the Lower Brulés, four miles distant, and within the limits of the reservation upon the other side of the Missouri. Our search was in vain, and not until late in the day, after we had made two ineffectual attempts to cross the river, did we find our friend, who, in company with Rev. Mr. Burt, had been detained later than was his expectation, at a distant point. Mr. Burt is one of those who came to this country ten years ago, from Berkeley Divinity School, after hearing William Welsh plead the Indian cause. He has ever since labored among the people as a faithful missionary and has acquired not only a knowledge of their character and customs, but also great proficiency in the Dakota tongue. We crossed the Missouri as the sun sank behind the reservation hills, with the blue sky above us from which the storms that had risen suddenly during the afternoon, and threatened an hour before, had now dropped to the horizon. Beneath us rolled a fierce muddy stream in whose waters, swollen by spring rains, our oars labored slowly. The evening was delightful, though

windy, and nature about us so fresh that we could not but feel a sense of joyful anticipation as we crossed the moving boundary line which separates two distinct people. Our road to the Indian Agency lay through country quite similar to that which we had seen upon the east bank—broken hills, with their steep ascents and descents—which the reckless driving of our Indian friend made at times rather suggestive of a break-down. A fine characteristic of this region is the singular clearness of the atmosphere, which gave a touch of peculiar beauty to the lonely hills about us, and an additional brilliancy to the young moon and Venus setting beyond. About nine o'clock we reached the outskirts of the Indian settlement, heralded by the barking of numerous dogs, who serve not only as guards to their owners, but also in due time as a replenishment to their larders. On our arrival at the parsonage, which stands close to the Mission Church, we were welcomed by Mrs. Walker, the wife of our Indian friend. This lady is a white woman, well fitted by kind heart and courteous manner to aid her husband in his work among their dark-skinned brethren. Later in the evening we were visited by the head chief of the Brulé tribe, Iron Nation, a tall, well-built man, whose cleanly dress and dignity of bearing would, doubtless, have surprised those among my readers who imagine all Indians to be filthy and degraded. He wore moccasins, dark trousers, a neat linen shirt, and a red handkerchief tied loosely around his neck. His black hair hung down in two plaits upon his shoulders. He greeted us with the ordinary Indian salutation, strange, though attractive to our unaccustomed ears, "How! How!" followed by soft, indescribable intonations, and a gentle clapping of the hands, when any remark of ours gave him pleasure. The expression of his face seemed, to our perhaps prejudiced eyes, to indicate neither cruelty nor treachery, but rather kindness and good will. We slept that night for the first time in a community of 1,500 Indians, among whom were, probably, not more than a dozen whites, including the United States Agent, his family and employees. Early Sunday morning, I looked out upon the view which my chamber window commanded—some level fields partly under Indian cultivation, a piece of timber land, a sunny strip of the Missouri, and beyond a line of

rolling hills. As my eye happened to glance at the foreground of this picture, on a little plot of grass lying close to the house, I noticed, with some curiosity, two pieces of white canvas flapping up and down in the strong wind. At times a slightly different movement than that which the wind produced drew my attention more carefully to them, when, to my surprise, one of these objects was transformed into the figure of a woman seated upon the earth, her white drapery drawn close about her head and person, whilst her face, which peered from beneath its folds, bore an expression of stolid grief. The woman, I learned, was one of the two wives of an Indian called Useful Heart, whose daughter, a maiden of sixteen, had but recently died. This young girl, some time before her death, had become a Christian, and was the only member of her family who had professed that faith. Her father, though a savage, and at one time bitterly opposed to the whites, seems not to have been wholly without natural affection, as his grief at the prospect of losing his child was excessive. He resolved to take his own life, a fact which greatly troubled his daughter, who begged him to relinquish his purpose, telling him that if he loved her he would no longer think of it. She had followed the "new way" because she thought it the true one, and she therefore believed it would be impossible for them to meet hereafter if he died by his own hand. Her father at last yielded to her wish, and before her burial refused to allow her body to be painted according to Indian custom, as such was contrary to her desire. One of her brothers came shortly after, in obedience to her last request, to Mr. Walker's house, in order to part with his scalp lock, and to wear his hair thenceforth after the manner of the whites. This act is regarded as the first evidence of a leaning toward Christianity. The little lock of carefully braided hair, which this Indian boy once wore, is now in my possession and seems to me a mute reminder that the best and deepest instincts of human hearts belong not to one race, nor to one color, but are the universal property of God's children upon the earth.

A little before half-past ten o'clock the ringing of the Mission Church bell summoned us to service. As we left the parsonage we saw the members of the Indian congregation gathering from all sides,

clothed in garments varied and picturesque. Many of the women were neatly dressed, and had red shawls or pieces of brilliant drapery thrown about their shoulders. They carried their babies in their arms or bound upon their backs. The men displayed a great variety of costume; some were wrapped in blankets, and looked as though just emerging from the old ways; some wore coats, and were dressed very much as white men, while about some fluttered that unique emblem of American civilization, the linen duster. We found the church a plain, wooden building, with capacity for about 150 people, bright and cheerful inside, and enriched by a stained glass window above the altar. Those who shrink from the thought of contact with Indians and who conceive the war whoop their only utterance, and murder their daily pastime, would have been both astonished and edified could they have been present and have seen a native Sioux Indian, clothed in white surplice, conducting, in his own tongue, the service of the Church, and have heard the full responses and sweet singing of his fellow worshippers, men, women, and little children, who, but a few years ago, were utterly destitute of Christian instruction, and in many cases hostile even to the presence of white men among them. After service was over many of the men pressed forward to shake hands with us, and manifested redoubled interest and pleasure when the name of William Welsh was mentioned in connection with ours. We found he was remembered not only among the people at Lower Brulé, but among all others whom we visited, as the staunch friend of the Indian race. More than one gift of considerable value was presented to us as a token of gratitude for his service of past years. The memories of these men are retentive as well of the kindness of their benefactors as the injuries of their enemies. At Lower Brulé we took up the first link of a chain of evidence, in reference to the Indian question, which we were able to follow without break during the entire course of our trip, to the effect that the Indian, like most men, brings forth good or evil fruit according to the treatment he receives or the circumstances with which he is surrounded. If he be treated with kindness and justice, and be given opportunities for improvement and encouragement for industry, he will become a *man*; if, on the contrary, he be treated with

contempt and injustice, if it be taken for granted that he is a degraded creature, worthy of any indignities his superiors may choose to inflict upon him, then he is likely to become, not a man, but a devil. The truth of this assertion might be apparent to any one who chose to make an unbiased investigation of facts. Unfortunately there are but too many who scoff at the elevation of the Indian, not so much because they believe him incapable of improvement, but upon the same principle, as, in former years, the slaveholder ridiculed the elevation of the negro, because there is more money to be gained from him when ignorant than when instructed. On Sunday afternoon we paid our respects to Major Parkhurst, who holds the position of agent at Lower Brulé, and were received by him very courteously. In the evening, after service, five or six of the leading Indians connected with the Mission called upon us at the parsonage. They pleaded with eloquent dignity the hopeless outlook of their people, and urged an awakening of sympathy in the East, which might render their condition more favorable. Gladly, had it been in our power, would we have given them an assurance of such aid. On Monday we again called upon Major Parkhurst, who afforded us an opportunity of seeing the agent's office, issue house, and the class-room of the government boarding-school. Monday afternoon was spent in visiting many of the Indian cabins and tepees, in all of which we were received with courtesy, and in some with hearty cordiality. On Monday evening service was again held in the little church, where, notwithstanding a severe rain-storm, quite a goodly number of Indians were present. On Tuesday morning we reluctantly brought to a close this, our first visit to an Indian community, much impressed by what has already been accomplished among a people whose temper, but a few years back, was hostile and dangerous. What has been done, however, is trifling compared with what might be done were such civil and religious opportunities afforded them on a large scale as has been proved indispensable to the proper development of our own race. After crossing the Missouri to Chamberlain, we went by train to the little town of Springfield, situated on the river, about one hundred miles below Lower Brulé Agency. Here we found Hope School, an institution founded and sustained by the

missionary effort of the Episcopal Church, under the direction of Bishop Hare. We reached the school at about seven o'clock Wednesday morning, after a journey of singular discomfort and fatigue, rejoicing to find ourselves in what we then surmised, and what afterwards proved to be, an oasis in the desert. Hope School lies a short distance from the town upon the breezy prairie-land which breaks into precipitous bluffs, whose sides are fretted and worn by the swift waters of the Missouri. Its situation is suggestive of health, air and freedom. It is a simple two-story frame structure, home-like in appearance, and pleasantly shaded by trees. We were cordially welcomed by Mrs. Knapp, the house-mother, who showed us into a cool, tastefully arranged parlor, fragrant with the odor of wild roses. As we sat there, surrounded by everything suggestive of peace and comfort, and heard from the adjoining rooms the sweet voices of Indian girls singing at their household work, we could not but ask ourselves, "Can this be the home of savage children whom some hold it money wasted to care for and to teach?" After breakfast we visited the school-room, where we found about twenty children, boys and girls, varying in age from six to eighteen, quietly assembled. Before beginning the lessons of the day, under the supervision of Miss Knight, each child was asked by Mrs. Knapp what duties he or she had previously performed. To this question, some such reply as the following was given in clear, distinct English, "I made my bed, washed the dishes, picked up chips, took bugs off the potato vines, swept the school-room." Thus we learned that all had shared in the performance of household work before beginning the duties of the class room. The advantage of such training is, of course, manifest, as not only are the girls thus accustomed from an early age to work that will be most valuable to them in the future, but also the baneful idea, so prevalent among the Indians, that there is degradation in labor, is early counteracted in the boys. We could not but experience a feeling of amusement and satisfaction, when, at the closing exercises, a week later, we saw these Indian youths, and among them a lad of eighteen, march into the school-room, each bearing upon his shoulder that peaceful emblem of industry, a common broom. After all of Mrs. Knapp's questions had been answered, Miss Knight began the

lesson for the day. A large card, upon which was a neat wood-cut, hung over the school-room door. This picture represented a little boy sleeping upon a carpenter's bench, with tools and playthings scattered in confusion about him. The children were required to write upon their slates a description of what they saw upon the card. We had an opportunity of examining the slates, when the children had finished their lesson, and were much surprised with the variety and clearness of the descriptions, and the excellent handwriting in which they were expressed.

The day following, Bishop Hare joined us on his return from a visitation to the various Mission stations, higher up the Missouri. His arrival gave us great pleasure, as it afforded us not only the society of a friend, but also the conversation of one whose long experience in the Indian country made his opinions interesting and valuable. Each additional day at Hope School impressed us more forcibly than the last with the good such an institution can accomplish. The change wrought in the children, by the devoted labors of Mrs. Knapp and her assistant, from their unpromising condition when taken from camp life, has indeed been marvellous. To witnesses of such work, the greatest difficulties of the Indian question melts away. The boys and girls about us, and with whom we lived under the same roof, were as bright, as active, and as happy as the best of those one might meet at home. Whether in the class-room, at play, or when attending to the simplest duties of household or garden, their conduct seemed to us equally admirable. Their obedience and respect towards their teacher, when engaged in school work, did not strike us more forcibly than the joyous freedom of their games when study hours were over and books had been cast aside. During our week's stay at Hope School, we heard no angry or unkind word from any of the Indian children, nor did we see any brow clouded by ill temper or discontent. Such happy results as these, however, were not obtained in a day, for when the school was begun, some four years ago, difficulties were encountered which promised little hope for the future, and were overcome only by patience which never tired, and faith which nothing could daunt. The popularity of the Bishop's schools is now so great among the Indians that numerous applications for admittance must be refused, through lack of

room and funds, which fact forms one of the many proofs that these savage men are more ready to receive, than we to give, the benefits of civilization.

During our stay at Springfield, we crossed the Missouri to Santee Agency, where St. Mary's boarding-school for Indian girls is located. No one living in the East can well understand how great a barrier the swift waters of this broad stream offer to travel, or to what vexatious delays a missionary is obliged to submit in his efforts to cross it. Hour after hour must frequently be passed with the object of one's journey perhaps clearly in view, until the fierce winds which fret the river's surface have subsided, or the ferryman, upon whom a traveler is entirely dependent, is willing to leave the opposite bank and come to the rescue. Our experience in endeavoring to go from Hope School to St. Mary's was such as to make us fully appreciate the difficulties attending western travel. Some three hours in all were sacrificed before we found ourselves, on the afternoon of June 23d, crossing the hot, sandy bottom lands, sparsely shaded by cottonwood trees, which lay between us and the Agency. St. Mary's school, with the church and parsonage, lies side by side, in a grove of trees whose foliage gives at once a homelike air to the buildings beneath, and serves to shelter innumerable mosquitos, with which the country is infested.

This institution, unlike Hope School, is for girls only, of whom we found, upon our arrival, some forty, gathered from various tribes and localities, in the school-room, and engaged with the closing exercises. The age of the scholars varied from ten to seventeen years. Their appearance was interesting and attractive—just such bright, happy faces as we had noticed in our former experience at Springfield. In addition to the scholars present, the school-room was quite crowded with white visitors from the Agency, and the neighborhood across the Missouri, together with a sprinkling of Indians—relatives of the children. The exercises were in every way creditable to those who took part in them, and to Miss Francis, the enthusiastic and efficient teacher in charge. Varied questions in arithmetic, spelling, grammar, or geography, were answered, verbally or upon the blackboard, with few mistakes. We could not but remark the singularly distinct, in many cases, beautiful

handwriting of these Indian girls. It was such as we believe a corresponding number of our own children would find it impossible to equal. A very pretty series of calisthenic exercises was performed with regularity and precision, to an accompaniment upon the melodeon; also choruses were very well sung, and several duets played by the scholars. When the exercises were concluded, a few impressive words of encouragement were spoken to the children by Bishop Hare and Mr. Lightner, Indian Agent at Santee; and then the little gathering dispersed. How excellent a thing for the cause of right would it be could intelligent people from the East, see not only evidences of mental training, which these Mission Schools are giving to Indian children, but also observe the practical knowledge of household work which they are rapidly acquiring! I can hardly speak too strongly of the impression which was produced upon us by this examination. Here are children, brought but a few months ago from the ignorance and filth of savage camps, from the closest contact with the barbarity of a nomadic and warlike people, who have already shown qualities of intellect and of heart, and have developed habits of cleanliness and order which reflect credit upon themselves and upon their teachers. At every turn, one feels the possibilities which await them, could not only a few devoted persons, but the nation at large, apply in their case those principles of justice which are so necessary to the well-being even of our own superior humanity. The good results which these schools have reached, are, I think, in a large measure, due to the wise administration of Bishop Hare, as their overseer, and the superior qualities of the earnest Christian women who have them in charge—women who have brought into their field of labor a devotion to their work, and an enthusiasm and wisdom in its performance which has already reaped a fair harvest, and which promises one still more bountiful in the future. With more than human fortitude and unswerving determination, they have led a so-called forlorn hope into the wilderness, and as objects of pity, contempt or derision, have gone far towards solving a problem which the world calls insolvable! We passed Friday night at St. Mary's, where, notwithstanding the oppressive heat, we were, thanks to the kind attention of the ladies in charge, made very comfortable.

Early the following morning, I was awakened by the sound of a rushing wind, which swept against the roof and chimneys above us, not in broken gusts, but with a low and steady roar, more like a torrent of falling water than a disturbance of the atmosphere. I ran to the window with some anxiety, remembering the terrible storm which devastated Santee ten years ago, and by which the Mission buildings were completely destroyed. I looked out upon a tumult of clouds, driven before the wind, their western edge dark and angry, whilst that towards the east was tinged with pale yellow by the dawn. Beneath them, trees and shrubs bent and broke before the tempest, whilst sand, small branches and leaves filled the air. Fortunately, with us, no serious damage was done; but in Iowa, the same storm which had traversed Dakota resulted in great loss to property and to life. There are about seven hundred Indians settled on the reservation at Santee, and their progress in civilization is in many ways more positive and general than that of any of the people whom we have visited. Nearly all of them live in houses, and are engaged in farming. Near St. Mary's School, we noticed crops of corn and oats further advanced than any which we had seen. These belonged to a young Indian, whose character for intelligence and industry stood very high. Rev. Mr. Fowler, the clergyman in charge of the Mission Church, has under his care some half dozen Indian boys, who not only live in his house and receive their schooling at his hands, but also are given a practical knowledge of labor in the garden and the field. On Saturday morning, after a visit to Mr. Lightner, at the Agency, who gave us many facts of interest concerning his work, we returned, in company with Bishop Hare, to Hope School, at Springfield. On Sunday morning, the Bishop held service at the little Episcopal Church in the town, when a very good congregation was present. Later in the day, we again crossed the Missouri to Santee, where the Bishop administered the rite of confirmation, during the afternoon service, to a number of Indian men and women. A service in the evening closed the labors of the day. On Monday, we visited the Presbyterian Boarding School, under the admirable and successful management of Rev. Alfred L. Riggs. The work which we saw at St. Mary's School impressed us as

did that we had seen at Springfield. Everywhere regularity and order showed the admirable management by which Miss Ives, the house-mother, directed the institution, and by which Sister Mary and Miss Francis, the ladies associated with her, supported her efforts. And not only was it manifest that the routine duties of the school were well performed, but also that an interest and affection existed between teachers and scholars, such as institutions of this sort rarely attain. The closing exercises at Hope School, to which we returned, took place on Monday, June 26th, and were repeated on the following day for the benefit of those Indians whose children were at the institution. All the children, both boys and girls, acquitted themselves as creditably as those at St. Mary's had done. We were quite as much pleased, however, by their modest demeanor and gentle manners as by the proficiency which they evinced in their studies. On Tuesday afternoon, after a hearty farewell to Mrs. Knapp and the children, we started by carriage, in company with Bishop Hare, for St. Paul's School, at Yankton Agency. This drive of about thirty miles was very interesting. It lay over the rolling prairie, at first broken only at intervals of many miles, by trees, streams or valleys—a landscape strange to eastern eyes. Towards sunset, magnificent stretches of the Missouri broke upon us, and to our left the prairie folded itself into great promontories, with quiet valleys between, which melted to green bottom lands, fringing the river's bank. We had seen no solitude more impressive. Occasionally, we passed an Indian on horseback, or a lonely cabin with its little patch of cultivated ground. Some time after nightfall, and with an ominous gathering of thunder-clouds about us, we reached St. Paul's School, where an eager crowd of boys shouted a chorus of welcome to the Bishop, and conducted us to the house.

Early the following morning, the ringing of a bell summoned us to the school-room for prayers. We found ourselves in a new and pleasant building, a recent gift to the Mission from some of its Philadelphia friends. It is two stories in height, with one large airy room on the second floor. Here we found the Bishop, teachers and boys, assembled for a short and simple service of prayer and praise. There was a great difference in these children, both as to age and appearance ;

some were little fellows of six or seven years, whilst among the older scholars were those who deserved to be rather called men than boys. Some, too, were so fair of skin and delicate of features as scarcely to reveal their Indian blood, whilst others bore the strongest characteristics of their race. Two among them, we learned, were brought, six months ago, from the camp of Sitting Bull, now under guard at Fort Randall, one of whom is the son of the famous chief. These children were in the camp at Little Big Horn River when it was attacked by Gen. Custer, with such disastrous results to himself and his command. The main building at St. Paul's is, for the frontier, quite an imposing structure, as we saw, after prayers, in strolling towards it. It stands upon a slight eminence, above the river, overlooking the agent's house, the Government building, with its rigid walls, and the old stockade fort, beneath whose protection, where guns once bristled, smiles a peaceful patch of vegetables. It is built of pale yellow stone, cut from a distant quarry in Nebraska, and brought, at great expense, to this place, for its erection. Here, as at Hope School, the scholars took their meals at the same time, and in the same room, though at different tables, with the teachers and guests of the house. Before sitting down, grace was not said, but sung; one of the older scholars striking the first note and the others joining heartily. At St. Paul's, as at Hope School and St. Mary's, we were as much struck by the character of the teachers as by the quickness or docility of the children under their charge. A thoroughness of discipline, joined to a steady enthusiasm for the cause, seemed to characterize all whom we met, and to account for the wonderful success with which their labors have already been rewarded. One could not be long with Mrs. Johnstone, the house-mother, or see Mr. Henry, or Mr. Edward Dawes in the school-room, without feeling where the secret of their power lay. Surely, more complete than the victory of bullet and sabre is that won by these simple qualities of heart and head. It had been our intention after leaving St. Paul's to travel across the prairie, by wagon, to Rosebud Agency, a journey of five or six days' duration. But the loss of the flatboat at Fort Randall, which was swept away during a severe storm, by which we were prevented from crossing the Missouri at that

point, and a report, which afterwards proved false, to the effect that the Indians at Rosebud threatened an outbreak, changed the course of our route. By a two days' journey in Bishop Hare's wagon, during which we crossed the river at Niobrara, we reached the town of Neligh, in Nebraska, on the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad, and went thence by train to Fort Niobrara.

- Our visit to Fort Niobrara was the first we had ever paid to a frontier military post, and there came over us, as we approached it, memories which spoke rather of the old world than of the new—where a soldier's life seems out of harmony with ordinary occupations. The "fort," if such a term may rightly be applied to a place destitute of both artificial and natural defences, lies on a broad, level piece of ground, upon the east bank of the Niobrara river. Just west of the stream, rise high sand bluffs, from which an enemy might render matters very uncomfortable for those on the low ground. As we drew near the fort itself, we passed quite a large number of gray cavalry horses, browsing peacefully in the bright July sunshine, and further on, a troop of bays. Occasionally, a blue-coated soldier would trot briskly by. We found the fort in quite a state of commotion owing to the national holiday, which had attracted numerous visitors, especially "cow boys," or cattle herders, from the neighboring country. Horse races, foot races, and sports of a similar nature were the order of the day. As soon as our baggage was safely deposited, we proceeded to the officers' quarters, in order to pay our respects to the commandant, Captain Montgomery. We did this simply as an act of etiquette, and great was our surprise at the cordial reception we met with. To Lieutenants Paddock and Macomb, we were especially indebted for the most delicate attentions; a room was assigned us which, after our traveling experience of the last few days, seemed in the highest degree luxurious, and on the following day every amusement which a garrison life could afford was put at our disposal. Early on Thursday, July 6th, after saying farewell to our kind hosts, we started, by wagon, for Rosebud, the ultimate point of our journey. For thirty-five miles, our route lay over absolutely unbroken prairie, almost destitute of water, and with scarcely a sign of animal life. When a short distance

from the Agency, but before it was in sight, we saw four Indians galloping towards us. Their appearance was wild and picturesque. With rifles balanced upon their saddle-bows, blankets wrapped about their loins, bare heads, ornamented with feathers or trinkets, and faces touched with vermilion and ochre, they were worthy of record upon canvas as typical warriors of the plain. Their intentions were altogether pacific, as we learned from our driver, of whom they inquired whether we had passed two ponies which had strayed from Rosebud the preceding day. Having gained the desired information, they galloped off over the prairie. A few moments later we reached Rosebud Agency. A sudden fall of the ground, below the ordinary level of the plateau we had crossed, revealed a deep valley, intersected by a small stream, and surrounded by precipitous sand hills. On the side of one of those hills we saw the agent's house, with adjacent buildings, while, scattered in every direction, over hill and valley, were Indian "tepees" and herds of sleek ponies grazing about them. In front of us lay the little cross-crowned church, with its parsonage, the home of Rev. Mr. Cleveland, the Episcopal missionary.

We met with a warm reception from this gentleman and his wife, also from Mr. Burt, whose acquaintance we had made some weeks earlier, at Chamberlain. The afternoon was spent in strolling about the neighboring hills among Indians and their tents, and in discussing the condition of affairs at Rosebud. The scene about us was strikingly picturesque. Men of a more savage aspect than any we had hitherto met with might be seen scouring the hills upon their ponies. Their costumes of vivid and varied colors; white, yellow, red, green, blue and black, appeared intensely brilliant against a background of gray sand, or the faded herbage of the hills. The appearance of white visitors is rather unusual at the Agency, and consequently we were regarded with some curiosity. One man asked of Mr. Cleveland, in Dakota, "What have those men come for?" His reply that business connected with the Mission had brought us seemed entirely satisfactory. Whilst all we saw was from an artistic standpoint, striking and attractive—far more so, indeed, than what we had observed elsewhere—the moral aspect of everything about us was gloomy and depressing.

Children there were in abundance—dirty, unkempt little creatures, scampering like rabbits across our path, or peeping shyly from the folds of a “tepee,” but no school for their instruction. One there had been, indeed, but for some reason it was converted into an agent’s office, and now the young people of Rosebud must be content with the distant chance of Hampton, Carlisle, or one of Bishop Hare’s schools, for whatever training they are to receive. We saw no fields under Indian cultivation, as we had done at the other Agencies, though there is no reason why the ground should not be abundantly productive, judging from the crops we noticed on a farm some three miles from the parsonage, where oats, corn, potatoes, and other vegetables flourished. The people everywhere seemed to be utterly destitute of any employment calculated to stimulate or develop their dormant energies; energies which we know exist, and which we know, too, are capable of development. Towards sunset the church bell rang for evening prayers, for strange though it may seem, daily service is held regularly in this remote region, and what is still more odd, there is always a good attendance. The congregation, for the most part, is composed of half-breeds, and white men who have married Indian women, although among these there is quite a sprinkling of full bloods. One man, whose acquaintance I made a few days later, journeys eighty miles every week to attend service (he lives forty miles from Rosebud), and his seat in the church on Sunday is rarely vacant. The day after our arrival was one of stir and activity in the camp, for it was that upon which rations are issued to the people, not in the form of meat prepared by the butcher, but “on the hoof” as it is termed. Wild Texan cattle are turned loose every tenth day, and the Indians are allowed the sport of hunting and shooting them while they run at large. Early in the morning we saw men prepared for the chase gallop past our windows in every direction, and by ten o’clock the hills were alive with horsemen and the frightened animals, which vainly sought to escape them. We could see the puffs of smoke and hear the crack of rifles all about us, and we congratulated ourselves that no ill-directed bullet or stray steer came towards us. Our arrival at Rosebud was just after the conclusion of the Sun Dance, quite a notable event of the

Indian year, when a general gathering of people from all directions is held at a given point; at which young men show their bravery by indifference to self-inflicted injuries, and those who have acquired more wealth than their fellows are expected to be prodigal in their gifts to persons less fortunate or more lazy than themselves. The social element of the Sun Dance, doubtless, is beneficial, but the barbarous tortures, which to a greater or less degree characterize it, seemed to us calculated to keep alive old and savage customs, and therefore to be most undesirable. Could not the Government, through the instrumentality of its agent, and by very simple diplomacy, turn this heathen festival into a Fourth of July picnic, offer some serviceable reward to those who had proved themselves industrious during the year past, discourage a baneful generosity on the part of those whose labors had won success, and entirely prohibit the degrading spectacle of self-torture? On Saturday, we paid a visit to the trader's store, to the house presented by our Government to the famous chief Spotted Tail, and to the Brulé camp, situated about one mile from the agent's office. Outside and inside the stores, we found many Indians idly gossiping among themselves, or lounging listlessly over the counters. Many of them were tall, powerful men, but their blanket costume, painted faces, and wild appearance showed how little progress civilization had made among them. We next visited Spotted Tail's house, a dreary monument of wasted funds! We were told that it cost the Government five thousand dollars, and yet now its condition is deplorable. Its rooms are almost devoid of furniture and its whole aspect is shabby, filthy, and forlorn. It is a wooden structure three stories in height, and when first built, doubtless, was, to Indian eyes, of palatial proportions. It reminded us of a third-class seashore boarding-house which was about to be abandoned by its occupants. This gift to their chief proved a source of jealousy and discontent among his people, who found it difficult to understand why he alone should be the recipient of so costly a favor. Had this large sum of money been so spent as to promote general industry, rather than to gratify the selfishness of a man whose influence with his tribe was always hostile to progress, doubtless the results would have been better. We saw the spot where

he died, last year, at the hand of Crow Dog, his old enemy and rival. An amicable adjustment of the difficulty which this act of violence caused between the friends of Spotted Tail and those of Crow Dog was made, according to Indian custom, by the payment of six hundred dollars and a number of ponies on the part of the murderer. Notwithstanding this arrangement, however, Crow Dog, who gave himself up immediately after the murder, was tried before a civil court, and sentenced to death; but as the day on which he was to have been executed has now passed without result, it is thought probable that he will gain a new trial. The Indians at Rosebud quite unconsciously presented to us a series of brilliant pictures, with a touch of the Orient about them, which might have inspired the genius of Delacroix or Décamp. One scene which we witnessed on our return from the Brulé camp impressed itself particularly upon my mind. As we descended a little hill and were about to cross a stream which ran at its base, we saw approaching us from the opposite side, and marching in single file, a company of some thirty warriors, men of great size and lofty bearing, whose brilliant costumes and strange ornaments sparkled in the sunshine. They were from Sitting Bull's band in the north, and were on the way to a council about to be held in a neighboring tent. Nearly all of them in passing us stopped and returned our salutation with a hearty hand-shake and cordial "How! How!" Sunday, our last day at Rosebud, was passed quietly and pleasantly. Three services were held in the church; those of the morning and evening were conducted in the Dakota language, while that of the afternoon was in English. After morning service I received a visit from an Indian named White Elk, the same man to whom I already alluded as coming from such a great distance to church. Mr. Cleveland acted as our interpreter. After some preliminary conversation, White Elk said to me, "My friend, it is now seven years since I gave up my wild life and have tried to live as a white man, to work the ground, to plant and raise my own corn; but I have no plough, and am greatly in need of other implements. When you go to your home will you see the Great Father at Washington, and tell him what I want? Perhaps he will help me." There was something touching in the simplicity of this man's

request—it was the plea of one seeking to do right in the face of terrible discouragements.

It was with regret that we left Rosebud, as we were obliged to do, on Monday morning. We had seen much there to interest us, much that was food for reflection. We had been among seven thousand people just emerging from a nomadic and savage life ; a people who, with a few bright exceptions, are idle and ignorant, with no inducements to work, no chance for knowledge ; a people under no restraint of law, with weapons in their hands, and yet rarely guilty of any outrage ; a people composed of men, women and children, like ourselves, and as we are, capable not only of evil, but of good. What these are capable of is plainly demonstrated by what Dr. McGillycuddy, the agent at Pine Ridge, has already accomplished among men but two years ago equally savage. Through his zealous and able efforts an efficient police force has been organized, eight school houses have been built, farming has been successfully encouraged, and a general advance in civilization has been made, to which not only missionaries, but army officers, testify. As we took a last view of the Indian camp, and turned our steps eastward, we could not but feel how great and grand a work might be accomplished, even among the wildest Indian tribes, by the exercise of simple faith, of judgment, and of justice.

SUMMARY.

THE close of our short stay in the Indian country found us deeply impressed by what we had learned from personal observation and contact with a people whose outward progress and inner life is, for the most part, unknown even to thinking men and women in the East. It is my purpose now to present in a simple and unpretentious way the result of my impressions, with the hope that those who can feel for sufferings inflicted, and who care to right wrongs endured beyond the limits of their own threshold, will stop to hear and exert themselves to aid the cause I would advance. First, my observations convinced me that the cry of "help the Indian!" comes most strongly from the mouths not of those who are sentimental, but who are practical in the exercise of their charity. They would point not to the noble red man of waving plumes and daring courage, who has been driven across rivers, mountains and prairies, from the eastern to the western sea, but to the simple child of God's creation, in whose heart burns the same mixed flame of good and evil, which lights or blasts the white man's richer life. And as they plead the Indian cause they would hold tenaciously to the theory of the possible development of all men and their elevation from a lower to a higher life, by means of Christian teaching and a wise political protection. In support of such a theory they would employ the solid argument of facts. There are, then, two divisions of the Indian question which it seems to me important to make, and to which I would invite attention. The first is religious, the second political. Let men regard the Christian religion as true or false, of divine or human origin, there are but few who can doubt its power as a practical element of civilization. To us this power seemed everywhere visible among the people whom we visited, and its record of good we saw graven in characters broad

and deep. We meet in the remote wilderness Christian men and women, in many cases persons of great refinement and cultivation, of earnest zeal and sympathy with their work, who were manifest centres of life and progress, and were worthy of every private and public encouragement as the benefactors of society and of the State. At Lower Brulé Agency, where the native clergyman, Luke Walker and his wife, were engaged in missionary labor, a marked result of the Church's influence was apparent. In dress, in manner, in life, we found the Christian distinguished from the heathen Indian. We saw men who, within a few years, had derided the Church, and had sought to deter their people from joining it, now living as its exemplary members, or, who, if not openly confessing its creed, were greatly affected by contact with it. Mr. Walker himself seemed to us a strong example of what an Indian may become, as he was, though of un-mixed Sioux blood, a civilized man, living in a clean, tastefully-furnished and comfortable house, attending faithfully to his duties among his people, and, through his hold upon their confidence and affection, winning them to a better life. Here, then, is ground for the statement that missionary effort, even from a material point of view, is not wasted force. The Indian has sufficient intelligence to perceive the motives which prompt white men to go to him. Those who go for purposes of war or of trade, leave the better part of his nature untouched, undeveloped, and as a natural consequence, are but too apt to suppose that such a nature does not exist, while those who seek him for his own good, and whose training and character are such as to enable them to approach him from a moral and religious standpoint, meet, in many cases, with a ready and sure response. The religion which they teach is as much of a practical as of a theoretical nature—to be cleanly, honest, industrious, as well as to attend the services and sacraments of the Church. Part of Rev. Mr. Fowler's work at Santee Agency was of this character, and, as I have said in an earlier part of my article, he gave instruction to six Indian boys, who were members of his household, in the cultivation of garden and farm. We are brought, then, to the conclusion, that the missionary is, if he be a man of proper character and motive, an impor-

tant factor in the solution of the Indian question. Our conversation with such missionaries as we had an opportunity of meeting, convinced us of their thorough acquaintance with Indian character, and that their views of the question at issue were untinged with "couleur de rose," but had been formed in the daylight of common experience. In the manifestations of good or evil among Indians, they led us to detect the presence of causes which explained their actions upon a reasonable basis, and gave hope of good fruit as the result of wise and just treatment.

In some respects a stronger influence than that of the missionaries is wielded by the schools, which, under Bishop Hare's management, have reached a high degree of efficiency. Of the three we visited, Hope School, St. Mary's, and St. Paul's, it would hardly be possible to speak in terms of sufficient commendation. From the fact that the children in attendance are boarders, and not day scholars, all the injurious influence of their old associations is avoided, and habits of steady industry, of propriety in speech and behavior, are acquired at that age when they are likely to take strong hold upon the life. The children gain a knowledge of the English language, which is an absolute necessity to any future progress in civilization, and without which they would be almost entirely at the mercy of unscrupulous white men, who, hitherto, have so easily profited by the ignorance of the weaker race. The Bishop's schools have done much to prove that the Indian children are by nature just as honest and as truthful as are the whites, and certainly what we ourselves saw would tend to show that they are equally intelligent. That they are capable of solid intellectual and physical work, there can be no doubt, though I do not wish to maintain that they possess that vigor and energy which is so marked a characteristic of our own race. In the study of this question I think it should be clearly understood that the Indian falls short of the Anglo-Saxon in his capability for sustained effort, although Carlisle and Hampton have effected a wonderful improvement in this respect, and so is at present unfit to compete with the white man upon equal terms. But it is also true that he has already shown himself capable of effort, which, considering his unfavorable circumstances,

is remarkable, and has given promise of increased capacity in the future could but a fair chance be accorded him. Here, then, I would finish my hurried sketch of what the Christian religion has accomplished for the Indian. By means of church and school he has learned, perhaps, for the first time, of justice and of love, and has come to feel that the blessings of these great principles are not for the white man only, but for himself as well. He has been taught the dignity of labor, that work is the foundation-stone of life, and that within it lies the secret of his conqueror's success. It is no longer a question, "Can the Indian be civilized?" He now is in numberless instances civilized, as was clearly proved to my friend and myself during our journey. A more pertinent question for to-day is, "Shall we allow the Indian to live, or is his existence unworthy our religious and political effort?" To such a question the Church of Christ can render but one answer, so long as she shall pretend to follow in the footsteps of her Master who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," and whose last command was, "Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Could Christians in the East but awaken to the reality of what has already been accomplished among the once ignorant heathen of the West, could they know how strength has come out of weakness, how even in the desert a highway has been made straight for our God, and that to the voice crying in the wilderness many voices have replied, surely missions to the Indians would grow tenfold through the power of a vigorous faith, and the shallow sneers with which their advocates have so often been assailed, be answered forever. But even though the Church should be aroused to send into the mission field many times the force of men and money, which she already employs, there will still be enormous obstacles to block the red man's road to independence—obstacles which church and school are alike powerless to remove.

This brings me to the political division of my subject. Very peculiar are the relations in which the United States Government stands toward the Indian. From the earliest days of the Republic

even to our own* time, he has been regarded not as a citizen, subject alike to the protection and punishment of law, but as a member of a foreign nation, with whom treaties might be made until it suited the good pleasure of the more powerful of the two parties to set them aside—as invariably happened in due course of time. Faith with an Indian has been considered no more a necessary part of public morality than, in bygone ages, was faith with an infidel; and so acts of perfidy, and frequently of wanton cruelty, have been committed toward men whose ignorance of our language and numerical weakness, has prevented other expostulation than an occasional outburst of savage fury. Our Government has adopted a system by which the various Indian tribes are settled upon large tracts of land called Reservations, where food and clothing are issued to them through the medium of an agent, who is charged with a general supervision of their affairs. The strongest of all inducements for them to become a settled instead of a nomadic people, namely, an individual possession of the soil, has never been accorded to them. In consequence of this state of affairs, an Indian labors with no assurance whatever that he shall enjoy the scanty fruits of his toil, for no sooner has he abandoned the tent of roving days, and built himself a rude cabin of logs, and begun to gladden the ground about his dwelling with a little crop of corn, and wheat, and potatoes, than the greedy eye of some white neighbor spies his success, and Congress knows no peace until he is driven westward. Not once, but a hundred times, has this been the history of Indian labor, and the reward it has received. We saw at Santee Agency a settlement of 700 people, living in cabins, farming their ground, and entirely peaceable in their habits, who were threatened with a change of reservation, and the consequent loss of what their labor had produced. Could any policy be more destructive of laudable ambition, of faith in the integrity of our Government, and in hope for a reward of toil, than that which the United States has systematically adopted toward the red man? Where would be our pros-

* Though within the last few years the Government has ceased to treat with the Indian tribes as foreign nations, they have been accorded, only in exceptional cases, a permanent right to their land.

perity, individual or national, were the efforts of our people charged with such a burden as this? Wherever the tide of emigration has brought the white race in close proximity to the reservations, there is a strong tendency on the part of settlers to invade the lands allotted to the Indians, and pressure is then brought to bear upon Congress to secure their removal to some other place. We saw a striking illustration of this fact when at the town of Chamberlain, which is situated upon the east bank of the Missouri, in the Territory of Dakota, with Crow Creek Reservation touching its northern boundary, and Lower Brulé, to the west, upon the opposite bank of the river. This town is at the present terminus of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad. A strong effort was on foot to break into Crow Creek Reservation, upon the north, and to run the railroad through the Lower Brulé Reservation, upon the west, so as to gain communication with Deadwood, in the Black Hills. It was urged, with considerable show of reason, that for fifteen miles to the north the land was unoccupied by Indians, to whom much more had been given than their wants could possibly demand, as the country was destitute of game, and it was therefore unjust to forbid its cultivation by the whites. To this the reply might be made that were the land given to the Indians in severalty, with the assurance to each that his possession would be protected by the Government, then the surplus land might be opened for settlement, to the advantage of both Indians and whites. Congress has as yet made no provision by which the Indian can claim land upon the reservation where his lot is cast with the certainty of a constant possession. For him to claim land beyond the limits of a reservation is practically impossible, as his ignorance of our language, of the value of money, and of property in general, would put him completely at the mercy of men who have pity neither upon his poverty nor his lack of knowledge. Why, it may well be asked, should our Government longer hesitate to grant the Indian an individual right to the land, at least to such men as have turned to honest labor—land with which he should not be permitted to part during a given number of years, a sufficient time to allow the development of qualities moral, intellectual and physical, which are absolutely necessary to his self-support? The

present policy is both inconsistent and unjust, and has destroyed completely the Indian's faith in the honesty of the Government's intentions toward them. To place tribes upon ground which all men know shall be theirs but for a time, and of which the march of emigration shall surely rob them, is to act alike regardless of statesmanship and of morality. May the time be not far distant when the people of this country, animated by no spirit of sentimentalism, but by the dictates of that justice upon which their own prosperity has been most surely founded, will demand that a more righteous policy be pursued toward this people, too weak to speak in its own behalf. Before closing, I would touch upon two points, which, from the political aspect of the question, are worthy of consideration. The first bears upon the system of agents, the second upon that of distributing rations. Doubtless, in the present state of things, the agent is a necessity, but one which has connected with it many evils. First, the salary of an agent is not sufficient to frequently induce men of the best qualifications to accept the position—a position which should be regarded as one of very high importance, and which men of unquestioned character and ability should occupy. The agent is the representative of Government authority, in many cases among several thousand Indians, over whom he may exercise almost unlimited control. They regard him as children do a father, and are strongly influenced by his example. It is in his power to curtail, or stop their supply of rations; to reward with plenty or punish with want, to afford facilities for house building and farming by the supply of a thousand trifling articles which can be obtained only through him. He can encourage industry by his precept and example, aid those who are well disposed toward progress, and anxious to be instructed in the first rudiments of civilized life, help the missionary by a regular attendance at church, advance morality and sobriety by his own well-ordered life, in fine, exert a mighty influence for good upon the lives of all over whom he has been placed. Or he may be the reverse of all this, a man devoid of dignity, capacity, sympathy, puffed up with a sense of his own importance and impressed beyond measure by the grandeur of his position, violent in his exercise of authority, petty in his jealousy toward those who would benefit

his people, insolent, and frequently unjust, in his administration, indiscreet, or as is but too often the case, immoral in the conduct of his private life. Our experience in the West was sufficient to show us that both classes of men are represented by Indian agents, and that it is probably due to the very insufficient salary which he receives that the agent of the former kind is not more frequently found than he of the latter. If the mass of right-thinking people in this country become aroused to a sense of the importance of the Indian question, if they recognize justice and honor as the basis of our dealings with this people, and resolve that systematic perfidy is an unworthy policy for the United States to pursue towards men too weak to defend themselves, then may we look for a great and lasting change in this matter—one which will secure benefits of a substantial nature to the Indian, and reflect honor upon the Government. It will then be deemed right to place the salary of an Indian agent not at the insufficient sum of one thousand, thirteen, or fifteen hundred dollars,* but at such a figure as will more certainly secure men of ability and high character to fill so important a post. I would now speak briefly upon the subject of rations issued by the Government to the Indians. That the Indians are at present dependent upon such help, in many, even in most cases, may be taken for granted. The inheritance of former habits, their ignorance of mechanical arts, and of farming on the part of the people generally, renders this a necessity; otherwise starvation would unquestionably be their lot. The Government owes them such assistance in consideration of the many injuries inflicted upon them, and the wholesale appropriation of their land. But it must be remembered that the Indians are not to remain forever in this condition of weak dependence; they are already accepting the general change which is rapidly overtaking them as a people and is fashioning their habits and occupations into those of settled, civilized men. With the progress of this movement, which it should be the Government's care to foster and hasten, the Indian becomes less dependent upon food furnished him by another, and in greater need of implements for the

* Of later years a higher sum is given under some circumstances, but the majority of Agents are paid as I have stated above.

cultivation of his farm and by which he may secure his own bread. Therefore, should not the policy of the Government look to the gradual decrease and final extinction of the ration system, and its substitution by such help as men rapidly moving toward a civilized life might require? During our journey we heard of such an instance as would seem to illustrate the feasibility of this suggestion.* The Indians at Sisseton Agency, at the time when reports were being industriously circulated of an impending outbreak upon their part, were actually petitioning the Government to supply them with farming implements in the place of rations, as they deemed the possession of tools of greater value than the gift of food. A serious discouragement to growing industry and independence on the part of many Indians in Bishop Hare's jurisdiction, lies in the fact that rations are issued at such short intervals, that men living at long distances from the Agency are obliged to waste valuable time in coming to the office to collect their goods. Indeed, we have known of Indians, who, at seasons when their crops demanded constant attention, found it cheaper to forfeit their rations than to abandon their farms in order to procure them. The principal difficulty, however, which lies at the root of the whole matter, seems to be that the Government's bounty has been designed rather to pacify the more restless and warlike tribes whose enmity it feared, than to reward and encourage those who were making every endeavor to lead honest and peaceable lives. This fact has been so patent that the wilder Indians have employed it as a powerful argument to dissuade their more advanced brethren from adopting the habits of civilized life. "Live like white men," they have said, "and the Government will despise and cheat you; join us, rob, burn, kill, and you will get all you want."† Are we content that such words should be uttered in the future with the same truth as in the past—we who pretend that in our land of all others industry is re-

* Since writing the article, the author learns that such is the object of the Department, and that such a plan has been successfully adopted in Indian Territory, though little seems to have been accomplished in that direction, in the Northwest.

† This stricture, while at one time capable of wide application, must now be used in a more limited sense.

warded, the rights of the poor are protected and justice is equally administered to all?

It has been my object in giving the foregoing account of our journey, among a people of whom such contradictory reports continually assail the public ear, to show to others what actual contact has indelibly impressed upon myself, that the Indian is a *human being*, not only possessing the evil instincts of sloth, selfishness and cruelty, but endowed with all noble faculties which that term implies. He is a man! Not a wild beast whose extermination is necessary to the safety of a higher order of creation, but a man for whom honor, purity, knowledge and love are not only within the range of possibility, but are qualities which already in numberless instances have been attained. Words are powerless to describe the depth of impression which our visit produced upon us in this respect. At every step we saw evidences of the mighty change—physical, intellectual, moral—which the religion of Christ has wrought in his condition, evidences of what his race may yet become, will we, as a people, not only point him to higher life, but break down the bars that block his progress toward it. Not twenty years have yet passed since the sin of slavery brought upon this land the awful chastisement of civil war, and lo! again to-day rests upon us a kindred shadow lying dark and motionless across our honor. We, who never tire of affirming the principle of man's equality have put our foot upon another neck, and whilst we offer protection to the oppressed of distant nations, we rob with systematic complacency, the poor within our own borders. Surely the wealth which we so persistently and dishonestly extort from them, shall have but bought us in the eyes of coming generations a crown of infamy to invite contempt long after our riches have been forgotten. The time has now come when all lovers of liberty and justice throughout the land should awaken to vigorous and organized action in defence of Indian rights, assured that their labors will not be without reward. To the writer of this article it seems apparent that permanent good can be secured to the Indian by the attainment of three things:

First, the gift of land in severalty, which should be made inalienable

for a given term of years, to all who are disposed toward progress and are desirous of tilling the soil.

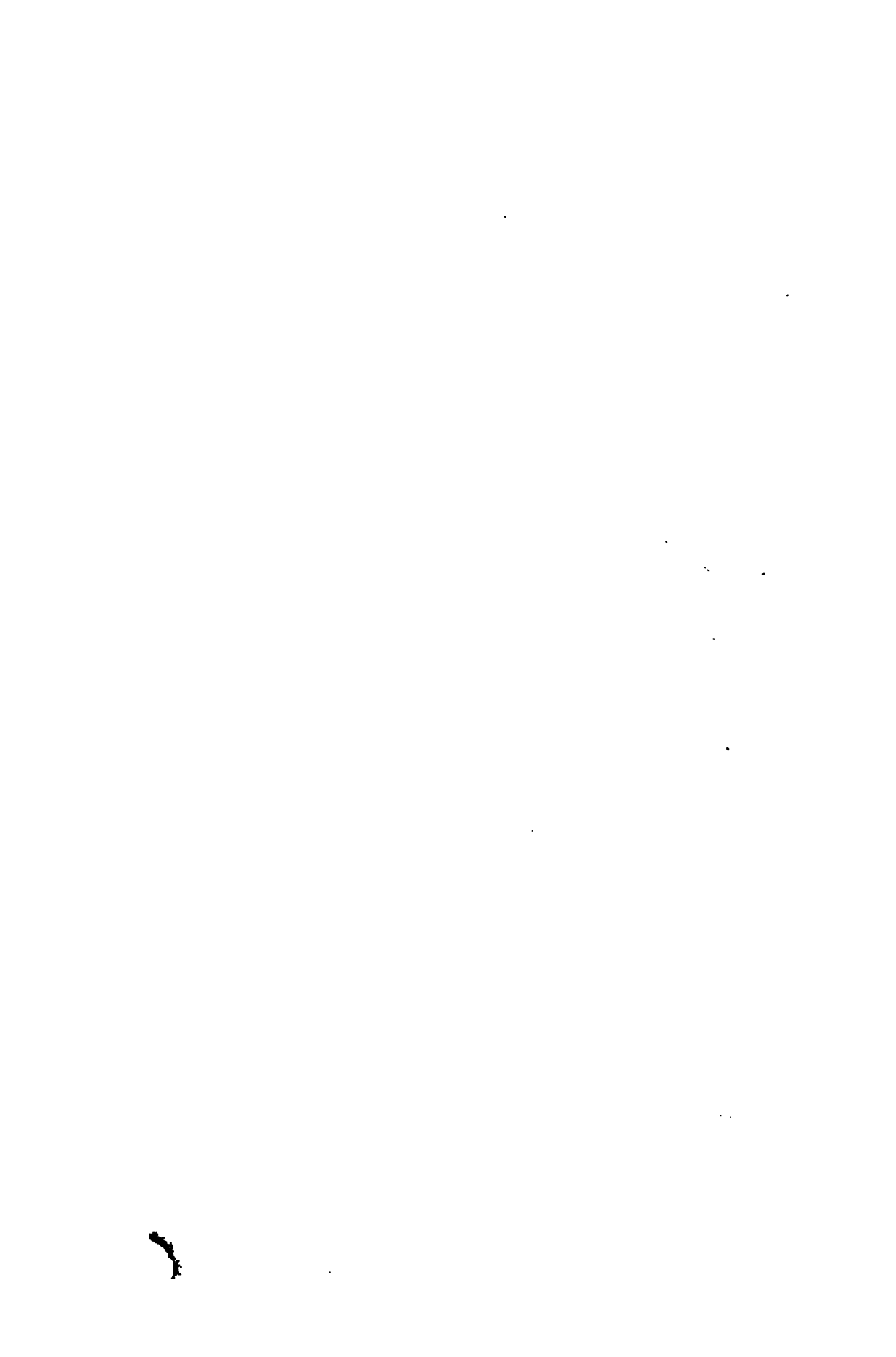
Second, the establishment of a suitable code of laws by which protection may be secured to the innocent and punishment to the guilty.

Third, the increase of sound education by means of Government and Church schools, and by the vigorous advance of missionary effort. If these advantages can be secured to the Indian it will not be many years before the full rights of citizenship should be his also.

The friends of the Indian ask not for a sentimental, but for a searching and rational consideration of this subject. They make no attempt to screen from public notice the atrocity of Indian war, whilst they demand the right to lay bare those hidden causes from which but too frequently such barbarity has sprung, and to bid men look not only upon the bloody spectacle of savage outbreaks, but to the beautiful though unnoticed triumphs of the Church, the school-house and the farm. They recognize the presence of evil among the red men as among white, and the necessity of force for its punishment, and for the protection of civilized life; they simply ask such discrimination in its employment as shall protect the innocent and punish the guilty. In this they invoke the aid of Christians who not only profess but live their creeds, and of citizens who conceive the State to rest upon a stronger basis than the dollar; upon the everlasting foundation-stone of justice and of truth. They would suggest for the solution of this enigma a method so old as to be perchance obsolete, though the essence of His teaching who lives forever, the precept, "Whatsoever ye would men should do unto you, even so do ye to them"—the golden rule.







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